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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KUWAIT 000185

SIPDIS

STATE FOR NEA/ARPI, S/CT

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/11/2015

TAGS: [PTER](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KISL](#) [KPAO](#) [KU](#)

SUBJECT: KUWAITIS NOT SURPRISED BY JANUARY 10 SHOOTOUT;
MOST BELIEVE VIOLENCE WILL INCREASE

REF: KUWAIT 00174

Classified By: DCM Matthew Tueller for reasons 1.4 (d)

11. (C) Summary and Comment: Most Kuwait dailies described the January 10 incident (reftel), in which two state security officers and one militant were killed in a shootout, as an aggression which "shocked the Kuwaiti street." While the act was roundly denounced throughout the society, interpretations differed on what it means for Kuwait. Although newspapers described the attack as shocking, many Kuwaitis were not surprised by the violent shootout. Mainstream Islamists were quick to denounce the attack. If the other involved assailants -- currently on the run -- are caught, many will be watching closely to see which prominent Islamists come to the rhetorical aid of those detained extremists -- something they have done repeatedly in the past. It is worth noting that even proponents of a GOK crackdown expressed no confidence that a Government response would be meaningful. End Summary and Comment.

12. (U) The killing of two Kuwait State Security (KSS) officers in a shootout with militants on January 10 has shocked Kuwaitis and has been roundly condemned by all sectors of society. All English and Arabic dailies devoted extensive front-page coverage to the story which included graphic pictures of the crime scene. The father of one of the slain KSS officers characterized what happened to his son as an "act of God" and demanded that the perpetrators be hunted and brought to justice. Many Kuwaiti citizens called news dailies and asked them to promote a weapons collection program as a security and social priority. Many liberals are urging the GOK to deal firmly with terrorists and to uproot their funding sources. Even Scientific Salafi MP Walid Al-Tabtabaei said that the attack is unacceptable and morally undermines the pillars of stability and security in Kuwait. He stressed that Kuwaitis will not accept violence as a tool for change.

What Does This Mean For Kuwait?

13. (SBU) During January 11 meetings with Kuwait University professors, it was apparent that not all Kuwaitis agreed on the meaning of the incident. Professor of political science Dr. Abdull-Redha Al-Assiri said that while this violent behavior does not have its roots in Kuwait, the country cannot isolate itself from regional influences. He agreed that an extremist mentality was growing in the region and that more attacks were almost certain to come, but believed that Kuwait's wealth and political freedoms would ensure that Kuwait would not succumb to the levels of violence seen in Saudi Arabia. He stated that the GOK is only looking at the problem as a security matter, but insisted they should be reacting to the socio-political ramifications as well. Dr. Al-Assiri stated his belief that the GOK would initiate a short-term crackdown on militants but that ultimately, nothing would change. Politically moderate professor Dr. Falah Madaris told PolOffs that the GOK must crack down or more violence would undoubtedly result.

14. (SBU) Traditional Salafi Kuwait University political science professor Dr. Abdullah Al-Ghanim told PolOffs that this attack shows the weakness of the extremists. He explained that the attack on KSS officers shows that the extremists have no meaningful targets and the very fact that State Security was following them at the time demonstrates that the GOK is able to monitor and prevent these extremists from committing acts of terror. Dr. Abdullah believes that there will be an increase in terror-related attacks in the short-term, but that the public denunciation of extremist actions in Kuwait will cause the extremist mentality to wane.

15. (C) The director of the Center for Strategic and Future Studies at Kuwait University Dr. Shamlan Al-Issa (protect), a liberal who has been warning about the growing threat of extremism in Kuwait for years, told PolOffs on January 11 that Kuwait is fertile soil for terrorism and the violence will only increase until the problem is addressed not just as a security matter, but as a social and educational problem. He said the GOK has been ignoring the actions of Islamists and has overlooked the close relationship between hardline Salafis in Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, thus allowing for the

growth of a mentality of violence.

Kuwaiti "Bloggers" Blast GOK Over Attacks

16. (U) Not to be outdone by the professional pundits, primarily young, pro-West, and well-educated Kuwaiti internet bloggers -- participants in internet web log chats -- had their say with most agreeing that the attack did not come as a surprise. One blogger wrote "theeeeey're heeeere!," and then continued "they were here a long time ago but the government ain't doing a thing about it!" Another wrote that he wasn't surprised at all by news of the attack and advised others to be prepared for more extreme things to happen. The writer continued "this is a result of the government's gamble since the invasion, by flirting with the Islamists as much as possible and giving them all the freedom in the world to do whatever they want with this country." A third blogger asked why the terrorist who died in the shootout was supposedly detained on several occasions but was allowed to walk free. This person ended with the comment that "lives could have been spared if we had a proper judicial system."

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